



SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST; A MANIFESTAION OF OUR COMMUNION WITH GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOURS

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LAGOS, NIGERIA -

The Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins has described the celebration of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Jesus as the manifestation of our communion with God and our neighbours. The Archbishop made this assertion in his homily at the celebration of the Mass of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ (Corpus Christi), held at the Holy Cross Cathedral, Lagos, Last week Sunday. The Archbishop described the Feast of Corpus Christi as the celebration of the truth of the faith of Catholics that Jesus is present with us in a continuous way, body soul and divinity in the Holy Eucharist. He added: "It is our faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist that makes us Catholics to value the Sacrament more than any denomination of community of faith".

Archbishop Martins remarked: "There are at least two celebrations that we observe in Corpus Christi. First and foremost, we celebrate the truth of our faith that Jesus is present with us in a continuous way. He is present in the Word of God that we read at Mass; He is present in the priest that celebrates the Mass; He is present in the Assembly of Faithful, the Congregation (Mt. 18:20 says to us *wherever two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is present among them*)."

He exhorts further that "By far more importantly, Jesus is present – body, soul and divinity in the Holy

Eucharist. He is present when we receive Him in Holy Communion during Mass, He continues to be present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar in the Tabernacle. Jesus is as present in the Holy Eucharist as he was present at their home in Nazareth. On the cross at Calvary and as he was preaching on the streets of Palestine". Using the readings to the day to affirm that Jesus is really and truly present in the Holy Eucharist, Archbishop Martins emphasized that the Holy Eucharist is not a mere symbol of the presence of Jesus but a substantial presence because the Scriptures tell us so and the Fathers of the Church have always believed it to be so, long before division arose in the Church.

On the Eucharist bringing us in communion with God, Archbishop Martins noted that receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist enables us to become one with God and are united to Him in a mysterious way". He added that in the same way, by receiving the Holy Communion, we are bonded in love with our brothers and sisters; pointing out that "We cannot receive Holy Communion and live in hatred of other people." Speaking on the need for sustenance of the dignity of the human person and oneness of humanity, irrespective of race, religion or creed. Archbishop Martins drew the attention of the congregation to the global demonstration condemning racism, as a result of the killing of George Floyd, a Black America, by a white police officer. The Archbishop described the incident as "an example of institutionalized racism that has seen black people in the United States profiled negatively and therefore subjected to all kinds of racial injustice.

Archbishop Martins however noted that a local version of racism is very much present in our country, Nigeria in the name of tribalism. He declared: "There is so much of it in our nation today. It shows itself when we boast about the merits and good qualities of our tribes but fail to see its faults and bad qualities." He added: "It shows when we fail to see the good qualities in other tribes and paint all the people with the same black brush. It shows when we give privileges only to people of our tribes and discriminate against others. These sorts of behaviours negate the essence of Holy Communion and we followers of Christ, in all Churches must make more efforts to give example of communion and unity in

Christ.”